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GOOD NEWS TIMES THREE

SAFER BEES: Bayer CropScience announced that its new seed lubricant, Fluency Agent, is now available for use by growers in the United States. Talc and graphite used in modern planters as a seed lubricant is either planted with the seed, exhausted into the air as the seed is delivered or remains in the planter to be cleaned later. There have been concerns that the talc and graphite can carry traces of insecticide which could affect honeybees and native pollinators.

Fluency Agent is a seed lubricant for corn and soybean seeds, which is designed to replace standard talc and graphite seed lubricants. In lab tests, the product was shown to help reduce the amount of total dust released in treated seeds by 90 percent versus talc and 60 percent versus graphite, thus reducing the potential risk of exposure to pollinators, if they come in direct contact with the dust during the planting process.

In spring 2013, Bayer conducted field trials of the product on 40,000 acres in the United States and Canada. Bayer has a Bee Care Research Center in North Carolina and Syngenta is conducting research with Ohio State and Iowa State to address the bee issue.

SAFER MILK: The U.S. Food & Drug Administration's (FDA) annual report of animal drug residue tests of milk found dairy consumers are safer than ever. Of the nearly 3.76 million milk samples tested for animal drug residues last year, only 731 tested positive for drug residues. None of the positives ever reached the consumer market level. Milk samples are tested at various steps in the dairy supply chain, including 1) raw milk at the farm; 2) bulk milk pickup tankers carrying raw milk from dairy farms; 3) pasteurized fluid milk and milk products in package form or bulk; and 4) other random tests throughout the supply chain. The report presents summary data on samples and tests conducted during fiscal year (FY) 2013 (Oct. 1, 2012 to Sept. 30, 2013). All 50 states and Puerto Rico submitted data for this report.

Twenty-six testing methods were used to analyze the samples for drug residues. Tests were reported on the samples for 10 different groups of families or individual drugs. Of the 731 positive samples, almost 97% were for Beta lactams. Only 0.014% (14 thousandths of 1%) of all truckloads of raw milk (445 out of 3.19 million) tested positive for medicinal animal drug residues in fiscal year 2013, down from 0.017% in fiscal year 2012.

SAFER ENVIRONMENT: A new draft report from the Environmental protection Agency on greenhouse gas emissions lists cattle as the leading cause of methane emissions, though all other animals including humans emit some methane. The report also, however, shows agriculture overall produces a small percentage of total greenhouse gas emissions and provides significant sequestration of carbon. Carbon dioxide by far accounts for the largest volume of greenhouse gas emissions at 82.7 percent of the total, and 94 percent of carbon dioxide emissions come from fossil fuel consumption, according to the report.

Agriculture overall is responsible for 8.1 percent of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, according to the report. The no-till ethic in our area is a significant factor in keeping greenhouse gasses in the organic form, building our soil versus releasing them to the atmosphere.

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